

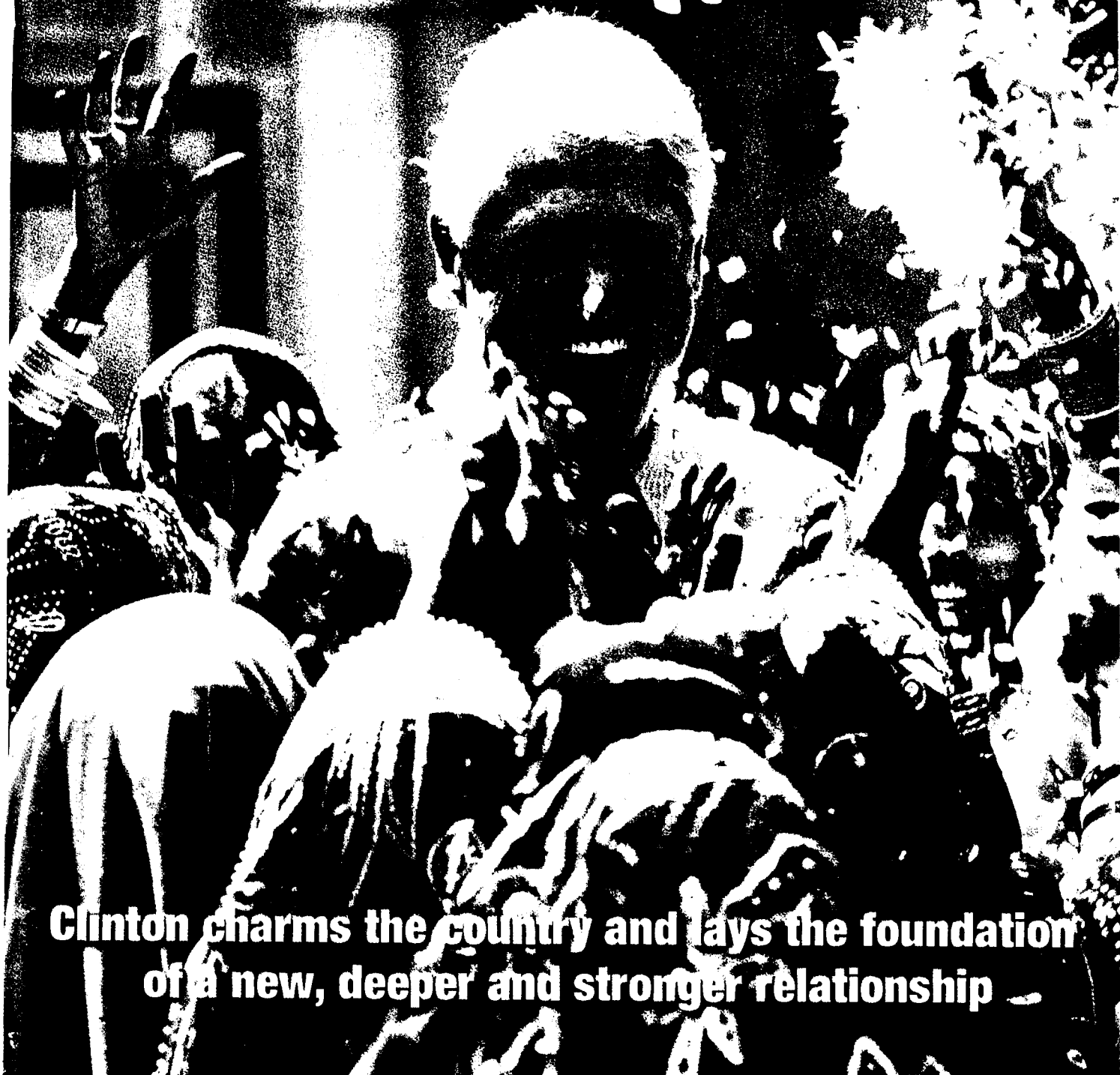
THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE

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OUTLOOK

Wow India!



**Clinton charms the country and lays the foundation
of a new, deeper and stronger relationship**

He could have danced all night

3/24

PTI



President Clinton and village women of Nayla, near Jaipur on Thursday.

By Nikhat Kazmi
The Times of India News Service

JAIPUR: They could have danced all day. And all night too — the vibrant women of Nayla and the vivacious American President in the sun-drenched courtyard of the primary health centre in the village on Thursday. For Nayla had found a new buddy in Bill Clinton who created history by spending two hours — more than the time spent with any politician — with the villagers in this quaint hamlet, 22 km off Jaipur.

And while it danced, the real India that lives away from the din of realpolitik, realised how difficult it was to hold Bill at arm's length. Specially when he was willing to let his hair down and dance in tandem too. And the fact that the Prez turned his back to uptight security in an unbridled bid to match his steps could only point towards a better synchronisation in Indo-US relations.

As the Prez held hands with the women — who literally mobbed him — and hopped to the fiery rendition of "*Chet sake to chet, zamana aaya chetan ka* (If you wanna arise, then you'd better do so, 'coz the world's arising now)", he offered his own little ode to India. "I hope this trip of mine will enable the world to see India in a more complete way. For, there may be poor people here, but In-

dia has proved how democracy can be used to lift the poor, to fight gender discrimination and bring different castes and tribes together," he intoned, amid the tango and the tambourines.

Having spent an hour of intense and intimate dialogue with the members of local gram panchayat, the Prez said he was "astonished to see how India was using its democratic institutions to tackle the problems which were crippling the rest of the world". He hoped India would not "get frustrated and give up", if its problems were not solved quickly. "I know



CLINTON
YATRA

there is still a lot of injustice and unfairness in the world, but I hope you will not lose your enthusiasm and spirit, especially since the lessons of your democracy are the greatest gift you can give to the world."

Before his tryst with local self-governance, the president had spent an hour with the village women. This was once again a dialogue where the women shared the trials and tribulations they encountered on the road to empowerment, while the president shared his views on the male-female equation and peppered his

point queries with friendly 'First World' advice.

"Tell me, are there any men who support what you are doing?" he asked the 'emancipated' six after listening to their long and arduous struggle against the male order. "Do your children find work in the village after education or do they have to migrate?" he queried. "Will more loans create more jobs for your children in the village?" he wondered. "Why don't you make better use of the computer to create employment generation too?" he suggested.

All this, while he shared the homilies with the *saathins* and heard how Batto Devi had become the first female supervisor in the construction business. Mangla Devi, the low caste sarpanch, was still fighting a court case against upper caste men who had challenged her election; and how the smart card had changed the women's co-operative dairy.

And if this wasn't comrade-like enough, Clinton bounded out at the courtyard and bounded away from his security — only to shake more hands. This time, with the constables on duty and the *aam janta* of Nayla who had found a new superstar soulmate. Small wonder then, they chose to formalise this bond with a 'friendship band' — a little red thread they tied on their 'yaar's' wrist.

► See Edit: Bill and Coup

Clinton's visit will lift the veil forever

By Nikhat Kazmi

The Times of India News Service

JAIPUR: Will there be any concrete, long term fall-out of the US president's India visit? There will. Far away from the din and uproar of protocol and urban showcasing, there are the five women members of the village panchayat in Nayla who have done something they never did before. They have lifted their *ghoonghats* and will henceforth view the world without a veil.

"I have never removed my *ghoonghat* in front of men ever before," says Rukmini Devi Sharma, a Nayla ward panch who will be sharing her experiences with the Prez at a mini-Panchayat on Thursday. "We women always cover our faces with a long *ghoonghat*, even when we work. But we have been asked to show our faces while we talk to Clintonji and ever since, I have been roaming around the village with my face uncovered." Needless to say, Rukmini Devi refuses to cover it again, unless she comes face-to-face with her father-in-law.

It's almost a feminist revolution that greets you as you enter the little village nestled in the foothills of the Nayla Fort. The women are articulate, confident, yet feminine. They talk about the local water problem, even as they show you the swollen toe where the buffalo had trodden or the gash on the arm

while cutting *sarson*.

Rukmini Devi, in her colourful red *ghaghra* and *choli* tells you how she dominates a panchayat which comprises 10 men and five women. "We have two meetings every month where we sit with the *mard* and talk about the need for hand-pumps. You see, there is very little water in our country... and schools too. We need more schools, more drains, more loan facilities for the women to become self-reliant..." Her list of must-dos seems endless.

As does Batto Devi's, the articulate village



saathin who has waged a silent battle for "*samaan kaam ke liye samaan mazdoori* (equal work for equal pay)" for women. Batto too will be relating stories of empowerment before 'Clintonji' because she believes he needs to know. Why? "*Kyonki hum to apne ghar ke maalik hain, par woh to saare sansar ke maalik hain* (I am the master of my own house, but he is the master of the whole world)," she says.

Nayla's experiments with female empowerment have actually borne fruit today. As Chitra Rathore, project director, District Women's Development Agency, says, "They have been working for 50 years in

the panchayat, women have had only five years. Yet the difference is palpable because women look at problems differently. The whole system of planning seems to have changed. While the men would focus on building more buildings and roads, the women have concentrated on water, health, schooling, property rights and social problems like dowry and rape."

And for those who are wondering why Nayla was selected for the Presidential gaze, the answer is simple. It showcases *naari-shakti* in all its splendour. It showcases the success stories of a women's self-help

CLINTON YATRA

group which began with individual savings of 50 paise and today owns a corpus fund of Rs 1 lakh. It boasts of the once impoverished vegetable seller who took a loan of Rs 400 from the group, organised her business and now sells vegetables to the opulent Raj Vilas Palace where Clinton will spend two nights. And it gloats about the female dalit pradhan who completed her five years in the panchayat without soiling her reputation, despite being beaten up by her husband who she refused to "take commission".

Truly, a women's liberation movement which as Chitra Rathore, project director, District Women's Development Agency, says, "has been working for 50 years in

Indian Village Women Find a Willing Listener

They Describe Their Hard Life to Clinton

Compiled by Our Staff From Dispatches

NAYLA, India — In this dusty village, President Bill Clinton listened Thursday to descriptions by women of their struggle for a better life in a land where custom dictates that they be subservient to men.

The president met with members of a women's milk cooperative who have been crusading for child care, higher wages and improved education for girls.

Women at the cooperative showered Mr. Clinton with flower petals in the village's ancient courtyard, clapping and singing: "Awaken, women of my land, it's time we empower ourselves." The song told of how women rise at 4 A.M. each day to grind wheat and sweep floors.

"Are there men in your village who support what you're doing?" the president asked. A woman replied that there were none 15 years ago, but "today, a number of them do."

A community of 8,000 near the city of Jaipur, Nayla has no paved roads, few jobs and chronic water shortages. But with electricity, schools, a medical dispensary and 70 telephones, it is better off than many of India's 600,000 villages.

The visit gave Mr. Clinton his first glimpse of village life on the Subcontinent. A scheduled trip to a Bangladeshi village Monday was canceled because of security concerns.

Mr. Clinton sat with about 50 residents inside a crumbling, 200-year-old stucco building that serves as the village's health facility. The women told him that their fight for basic equality had been difficult, but was producing results.

"It took us a lot of effort to convince every family that every daughter ought to attend school," said Shakuntala

Sharma, the mother of five daughters. "I was determined to educate every one of them," she added.

Another woman, Sattosh Sharma, said she was now viewed as an authoritative voice in the village — and in her family. "My father asks me, and then my brother," in making decisions, she said.

Of course, she added, all that occurred after the women of Nayla banded together and decided that "they don't have to suffer in silence. They have to fight for their rights."

Batto Debi said that when her husband died, her in-laws tried to force her to marry his younger brother. "I would constantly keep crying and feeling helpless," she said.

Then she sought out other women. "I learned about my rights and I learned I could fight for my rights," Mrs. Debi said.

Mr. Clinton was spending Thursday and Friday in rural India, visiting Nayla and Jaipur, famous for its pastel-colored forts, and searching on safari for a rare Bengal tiger. He will visit Pakistan on Saturday.

He and his daughter, Chelsea, were quite likely to view Bengal tigers at the Ranthambhore National Forest Reserve — some were recently seen lounging beside a road, studying crews of workers repairing potholes before the president's arrival.

"His chances of sighting a tiger will be very high," said Rajiv Kumar Tyagi, head of the reserve.

Ranthambhore was involved early in the effort to save the wild Bengal tiger from extinction.

In 1972, only 14 tigers were left in the sanctuary. Their numbers peaked at 44 in 1989, but poachers later were thought to have killed all but 17 of the cats. The



Children in Jaipur greeting Mr. Clinton as he turned tourist on Thursday. Reuters

population now is estimated at 32.

The park also has more than 270 species of birds and animals, including wild boar, sloth bears, leopards and black eagles.

(AP, Reuters)

■ Bangladesh Defends Security

Bangladesh defended on Thursday its security for Mr. Clinton's visit, with a Foreign Ministry official saying that his safety was "fully under control," according to The Associated Press in Dhaka.

Foreign Secretary Shafi Sami declined to comment on reports that a threat by Osama bin Laden had led to the cancellation of Mr. Clinton's visit to a village outside Dhaka during his one-day visit Monday.

"We felt the security situation was fully under control," Mr. Sami said.

The New York Times, quoting U.S. officials in Washington, reported Wednesday that the village tour was canceled

after reports of a possible attack by terrorists linked to Mr. bin Laden.

Asked about the report, Mr. Sami said, "I have nothing to add."

Mr. Clinton was to have taken a helicopter to Jayapura village, 45 kilometers (28 miles) from Dhaka, and stop on the way at the National Martyrs' Memorial. The route involved flying over a wooded area, from where a missile could easily have been fired at the helicopter from a shoulder launcher, The Times said, quoting the officials.

Bangladeshi and U.S. agents had worked for weeks to put in place a tight security cordon around places that Mr. Clinton was to visit.

The authorities closed off roads and nearly 12,000 security officers patrolled streets and rooftops along the routes of the president's motorcade. The international airport was shut an hour before and after the arrival and departure of Mr. Clinton's flight.

Asian Age 3/24/00



EXPERIENCING GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY, INDIAN STYLE: US President Bill Clinton is surrounded by members of the Nyala village panchayat in Rajasthan on Thursday. He visited Nyala to learn about projects to improve the economic condition of women. (Reuters)

Times of India

3/23/00

Smart cards click milk business 3/23

The Times of India News Service

JAIPUR: Smart cards is helping women empowerment in Rajasthan. The all women Dhoblai Milk Cooperative Society of Naila village, about 22 km from here, has pioneered a system, using smart card for members. It helps maintain authentic and accurate milk supply records as well as secures payment transactions.

Smart Chip Ltd has developed this concept for the milk collection centre and has implemented it through the state owned Rajasthan Electronics and Instrumentation Ltd. Santosh Sharma secretary of the cooperative, will explain it to US President Bill Clinton on Thursday how IT is helping the villagers in the milk collection job.

"This system has improved our lives, as well as our earnings. The smart card has made it very easy for us to identify members and keep their records in order," explained Sharma. The society collects on an average 750 litres per day.

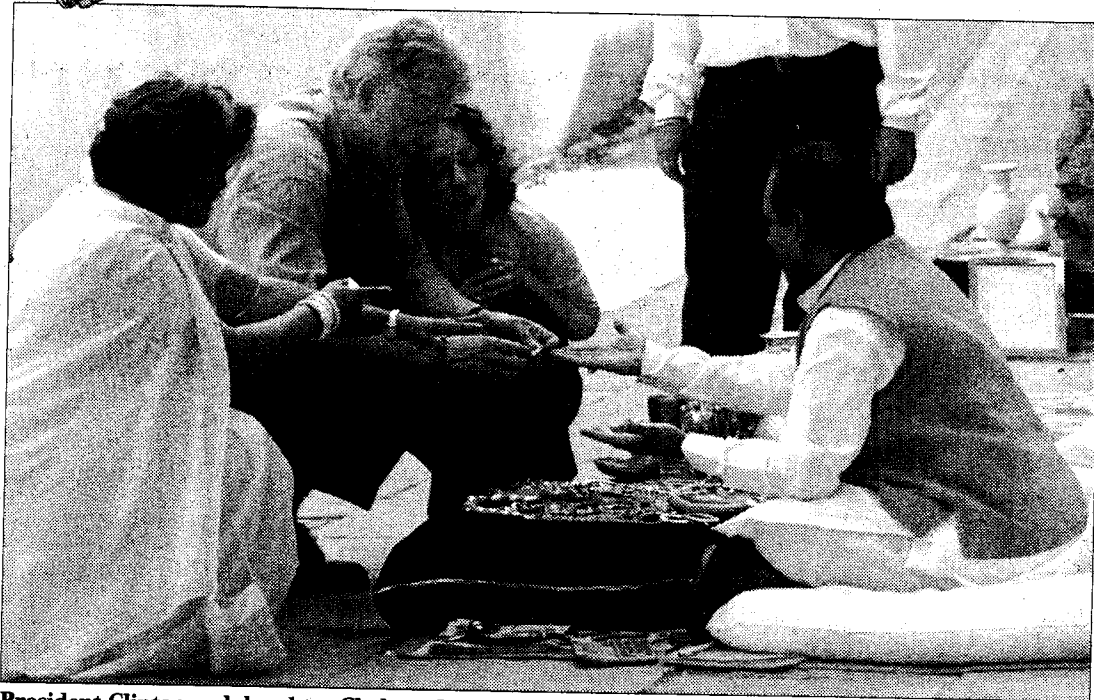
President of the cooperative Chanhdrakanta Goswamy and Sharma agree that after the installation of this facility, all transactions have become easy and only the genuine person is able to withdraw the payments.

Smart Chip Ltd MD explained, "There were times when their spouses or other male relatives would collect dues on their behalf, leaving them with little or nothing at all. But after the smart card revolution, this has changed," he said.

The Asian Age 3/24/00



THE PRESIDENT GETS SMART! President Clinton shows his Smart Card, presented to him by the members of the Dhobalai Village Dairy Cooperative, at Nyala in Rajasthan on Thursday. The card makes him a member of the cooperative. (PTI)



President Clinton and daughter Chelsea shop in an open market after touring Amber Fort in Jaipur

Bill gets a taste of asli India ^{3/24} ET

From Page 1

WHICH made things kind of difficult for the interpreter, Kanchan Mathur, who read out translations that didn't match the narrative! But he heard them all. From Shakuntala Sharma who talked about her five daughters and the importance of "mahila shakti" to Santosh Devi of Doblai who, as a young widow setting up her dairy cooperative had to tell the village elders she was going to see a movie when she was actually going to the bank, Clinton listened approvingly to copybook stories of female empowerment. Batto's story about her being a rare construction supervisor drew delighted applause from the president, though, to a voluble Shakuntala, the president interrupted proceedings to say, "You can get elected from anywhere in the world, anytime." Yes, after three days in this country, Mr Clinton finally got a taste of real India, no thanks to his security detail.

In fact, the Prez complained bitterly about Agra being a "ghost town" as the over-zealous US secret service and a terrified state administration emptied the Taj Mahal area of human life. Naila gave him that vital human touch since Jaipur itself didn't get much

of a look-see from him.

The previous night, the president's chopper had to make last minute changes due to a gusty sandstorm but Raj Vilas greeted him and Chelsea with quiet charm. Even the hotel chain's supremo, Mr P R S 'Biki' Oberoi was on hand to greet them, and present the Prez with a copy of Gandhiji's My Experiments with Truth.

But Naila gave him a li'l of everything on the side. Even e-governance in action. The Rajasthan government's IT policy was launched today with illiterate villager Kailash Devi inaugurating the programme that brings the state administration to Naila. According to the director IT, Rohit Singh, it took Kailash Devi just an amazing three days to master Windows95.

It took a quasi-literate Santosh Devi just a couple of days to master the smart card system on the computer that helps her run the dairy cooperative. Her children, she swears, will be computer literate. And she presented Mr Clinton with a smart card, making him an official member of the cooperative. Visibly moved, Mr Clinton said, "I will keep this in White House as a symbol of women's empowerment."

The Asian Age 4/4/2000

The Asian Age April 4, 2000

I could have danced all night, Clinton tells Chatwal

BY ASHISH KUMAR SEN

San Francisco, March 31: Back home after a historic trip to South Asia, which included the first visit by a US President to India in 22 years, Mr Bill Clinton is raving about the womenfolk of Nyala.

"I could have danced all night," the President told a cozy gathering of America's elite during a private dinner at a Manhattan residence on Thursday night. Admitting he was bowled over by a flock of colourfully attired Rajasthani women, Mr Clinton kept gue-

sts entertained with equally colourful tales of the time he broke into a jig with these ladies, his providential sighting of not one but two tigers at Ranthambore and the fragrant garlands that were repeatedly placed around his neck.

"He was completely taken aback by the progress in India's villages and was very impressed with the vast knowledge of the rural women with whom he interacted. He said he couldn't imagine a village in India being so advanced," Mr Sant Chatwal, a prominent New York hotelier who was

the only Indian-American guest at the dinner,

told *The Asian Age*. Mr Chatwal, the founder of Bombay Palace restaurants, an international restaurant chain in the US, Canada, the UK, Mexico, Europe, and Asia, said the President felt the wisdom the village women had acquired through "natural education" was more in-depth than the kind of knowledge basic education could provide.

Mr Chatwal, who is also involved with budget hotels in New York City and serves as

THE BOTTOM LINE

the president of Hampshire Hotels and Re-

sorts, said Mr Clinton admitted that prior to his visit he had not fathomed how vast India actually is. "I wish I had gone there earlier... it was unbelievable," Mr Clinton told the gathering.

On a more serious note, a relaxed Mr Clinton said he was pleased with India's response to his keenness that India and the US work as partners. "They responded very well... this is the beginning of a relationship and both

sides will have to work on it," he said. Asked whether he was considering removing all sanctions imposed on India after the nuclear tests in May 1998, Mr Clinton replied: "They (the sanctions) are just a technicality... we really would like to do something for India."

"His interest in India was genuine," Mr Chatwal admitted. "Though he didn't mention India, Mr Clinton said he was extremely concerned about '10 or 12 countries' who are playing with nuclear weapons, and felt this was a potential threat which the world

faced," Mr Chatwal said. "He said that it was his duty as President to see that the other countries of the world didn't have to pay for unnecessary acts of foolishness," he added.

Mr Clinton said he had advised Pakistan that it was in its interest, being "too weak (economically)," to maintain good relations with its neighbours. For the President it's hasta la vista, India. Mr Clinton said while he will not be able to make this visit during his term as President, he would definitely go back as a regular US citizen.

KASHMIR: SINISTER TURN

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WATER: PLAGIARISM ROW

APRIL 3, 2000

INDIA TODAY



ATTARI
SMUGGLERS'
JUNCTION

CHARMING OF INDIA

Exuding warmth, the US President sets the pace
for a brave new partnership with India

President Bill Clinton at Nayla village in Rajasthan